The Need for Change: While ENDC and CCD were instrumental in producing some disarmament agreements, no accords were reached on certain major disarmament aims such as a comprehensive test ban, nuclear disarmament, chemical weapons or conventional weapons and forces. ENDC and CCD had used United Nations facilities but were set up outside the framework of the United Nations, under the co-chairmanship of the United States and the USSR. France, although a member, never took part and China was not a member. Many UN Members felt that the chairmanship should be rotated, that a more representative membership was needed and that every effort should be made to encourage the participation of all five nuclear Powers.

Committee on Disarmament: The arrangements welcomed by the Assembly in 1978 for the new Committee on Disarmament were aimed at making the negotiating body "more effective and less removed from the security concerns of the membership of the UN" as Secretary-General Waldheim observed.

The CD's enlarged composition ensures the better representation of different regions and viewpoints. The chairmanship is rotated on a monthly basis, by alphabetical order of countries. The work is conducted by consensus. Non-member countries are able to take part in discussions. In addition to formal meetings (open to the public, unlike meetings of the ENDC and CCD), the CD holds frequent informal meetings which permit more spontaneous discussions.

The CD meets for about four months of the year at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. It does not meet when the Assembly is in session.

The CD's closer relationship with the United Nations is marked by the fact that its Secretary was appointed by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Committee, and serves as his personal representative.

Members of CD: The Committee on Disarmament is open to the nuclear-weapon States and the following 35 others including 21 non-aligned countries and 14 others divided between socialist and Western groups: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Canada, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Ethiopia, German Democratic Republic, Germany, Federal Republic of, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Romania, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Venezuela, Yugoslavia and Zaire.

France, which had not joined in the work of the ENDC and CCD, became an active participant in the CD. China did not take its seat as a member in 1979, but followed its work and reserved the right to participate at an appropriate time in the future.

Initial Efforts of CD: In 1979, the CD took up questions of nuclear disarmament and a comprehensive nuclear test ban, chemical weapons, radiological weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States.

Other items on its continuing agenda include conventional weapons, reduction of military budgets, reduction of armed forces, disarmament and development, disarmament and international security, collateral measures (including confidence-building measures and verification methods) and a comprehensive disarmament programme.

Disarmament Commission: While the Assembly's First Committee now deals exclusively with disarmament and related matters during the Assembly sessions, the creation of the Disarmament Commission provides a forum for discussion of disarmament proposals when the Assembly is not in session. It is the successor to the Disarmament Commission established by the Assembly in 1952 with limited membership, and later expanded to include all UN Members. The earlier Commission, active in the 1950s, had not met since 1965.

The Commission began its substantive work by outlining elements of the comprehensive programme of disarmament to be elaborated by the CD. It also has on its agenda the following items: "Consideration of various aspects of the arms race, particularly the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, in order to expedite negotiations aimed at effective elimination of the danger of nuclear war", and "Harmonization of views on concrete steps to be undertaken by States regarding a gradual, agreed reduction of military budgets and reallocation of resources now being used for military purposes to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of the developing countries".

Other Methods: The United Nations also encourages bilateral negotiations (e.g. SALT talks) and regional efforts (e.g. Treaty of Tlatelolco, European mutual force reduction negotiations between NATO and Warsaw Pact nations). Special conferences may be convened on specific issues (e.g. the 1979 Conference on excessively injurious conventional weapons). The Assembly plans another special session on disarmament in 1982, and has said that a world disarmament conference should be convened at the earliest appropriate time.

-o-

October 1979.